

National Jewish Health Offering COVID-19 Antibody Tests

MAY 11, 2020

DENVER — Beginning Tuesday, May 12, National Jewish Health will offer the IgG antibody test for COVID-19 directly to consumers, without a physician order, for \$89. The IgM antibody test for COVID-19 will continue to be available, but will require a [physician referral](#).

After several weeks of offering both the IgM and IgG tests directly to consumers, National Jewish Health clinical leadership has determined that the interpretation of the IgM test result is best done when a patient is already working directly with their doctor.

A positive COVID-19 IgG antibody test indicates that a person has had COVID-19. IgG antibodies generally develop 1 to 3 weeks after infection and remain in the blood for some period of time after the infection has passed.

A positive COVID-19 IgM antibody test also indicates that a person has had COVID-19. But given the time course over which IgM antibodies develop, results and interpretation of the results should be discussed with a physician.

National Jewish Health has seen tremendous demand for the tests and is working to increase testing capacity soon to meet that demand.

APRIL 22, 2020

DENVER — Beginning Friday, National Jewish Health is offering COVID-19 antibody testing validated at National Jewish Health by a team of renowned researchers and clinicians. The tests have been submitted for emergency use authorization from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Antibody tests, also known as serology tests, detect antibodies in the blood, which indicate that a person has had COVID-19 and mounted an immune response to the virus that causes it.



“Moving forward with antibody testing provides important information about who has had COVID-19,” said Michael Salem, MD, President and CEO of National Jewish Health. “It adds an additional invaluable tool to our high-capacity virus testing towards understanding the extent of the COVID-19 pandemic in the broader population and in charting a path to renewed social and economic activity.”

Dr. Salem added, “The introduction of antibody testing is the result of tremendous collaboration between our scientists, physicians and laboratory experts to create robust and effective tools that are needed to continue to make progress against this pandemic.”

With the addition of the COVID-19 antibody tests, National Jewish Health now offers three different laboratory tests related to the novel coronavirus Sars-Cov-2, and the disease it causes, COVID-19. The first test, which is the molecular diagnostic test most people are familiar with, detects presence of the virus. The new antibody tests now

being introduced, check for an immune response to viral infection. National Jewish Health has been testing for the presence of the virus in people's airways since early March using the molecular test and recently expanded the availability of that most common diagnostic test for COVID-19.

Now, National Jewish Health has added the serologic IgM and IgG antibody tests to detect antibodies to the virus in blood serum that is collected with a simple blood draw. Antibodies are part of the immune response to viruses. The antibody test kits were purchased from Epitope Diagnostics, Inc., then refined and validated by National Jewish Health using blood from patients with laboratory confirmed COVID-19 and blood drawn from patients in 2017, before COVID-19 existed.

The IgG antibody test detects IgG antibodies that, in most patients, develop 7 to 10 days after symptoms of COVID-19 begin. IgG antibodies remain in the blood after an infection has passed. They indicate that a person has had COVID-19 in the recent past and has developed antibodies that may protect from future infection. The extent of immunity is under active investigation.

A person who has been infected may have a negative test result. People produce different levels of antibodies in response to an infection. Some people, especially immunocompromised people, may produce very few or no antibodies to an infection.

Antibodies can provide protection against reinfection by the same organism, although strength of the protection and how long the protection may last varies by disease. It is unknown at this point what kind of protection antibodies provide against SARS-CoV-2 reinfection.

The second of the antibody tests detects IgM antibodies. IgM is the first antibody produced by the immune system when a virus attacks. IgM antibodies disappear soon after the virus has been cleared from the body. A positive IgM test indicates that a person has been infected, may still be infected and has begun to have an immune response to the virus. A person with a positive IgM test may still have an active infection.

How to get the antibody tests

Antibody testing will begin on Friday with appointment scheduling for the test opening today. You can be scheduled by self-referral, meaning an individual can decide to get the antibody tests on their own, or through a physician referral order. The molecular virus test is available only with a physician referral.

Antibody testing is meant for people without symptoms of COVID-19. People with symptoms of possible active COVID-19, such as cough, fever or shortness of breath, should have the molecular test that detects the presence of the virus in the nose and airways.

Self-referral scheduling

An individual requesting the antibody test on their own can do so [online](#) and choose a drive-through testing appointment within the next few days. Cost for a self-referred antibody test is \$94, which is paid at the time the appointment is made through the online form. The test involves a blood draw, which is then sent on to the lab. Results will be sent to the individual within 7-10 days.

Physician scheduling

An individual working through their doctor to obtain the antibody tests and/or the virus test can have their physician send a referral order in advance (form available [here](#)). Once the order form has been received, the National Jewish Health scheduling team will contact the patient and offer a two-hour time period for drive-through testing. Results will be sent to the physician within 7-10 days.

Drive-through testing is done at the National Jewish Health COVID-19 testing tent, located in the Harrison Street parking lot between 13th and 14th Avenues.

National Jewish Health is the leading respiratory hospital in the nation. Founded 121 years ago as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health today is the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to groundbreaking medical research and treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders. Patients and families come to National Jewish Health from around the world to receive cutting-edge, comprehensive, coordinated care. To learn more, visit the [media resources page](#).

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